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People's Reporter

A FORUM OF CURRENT AFFAIRS

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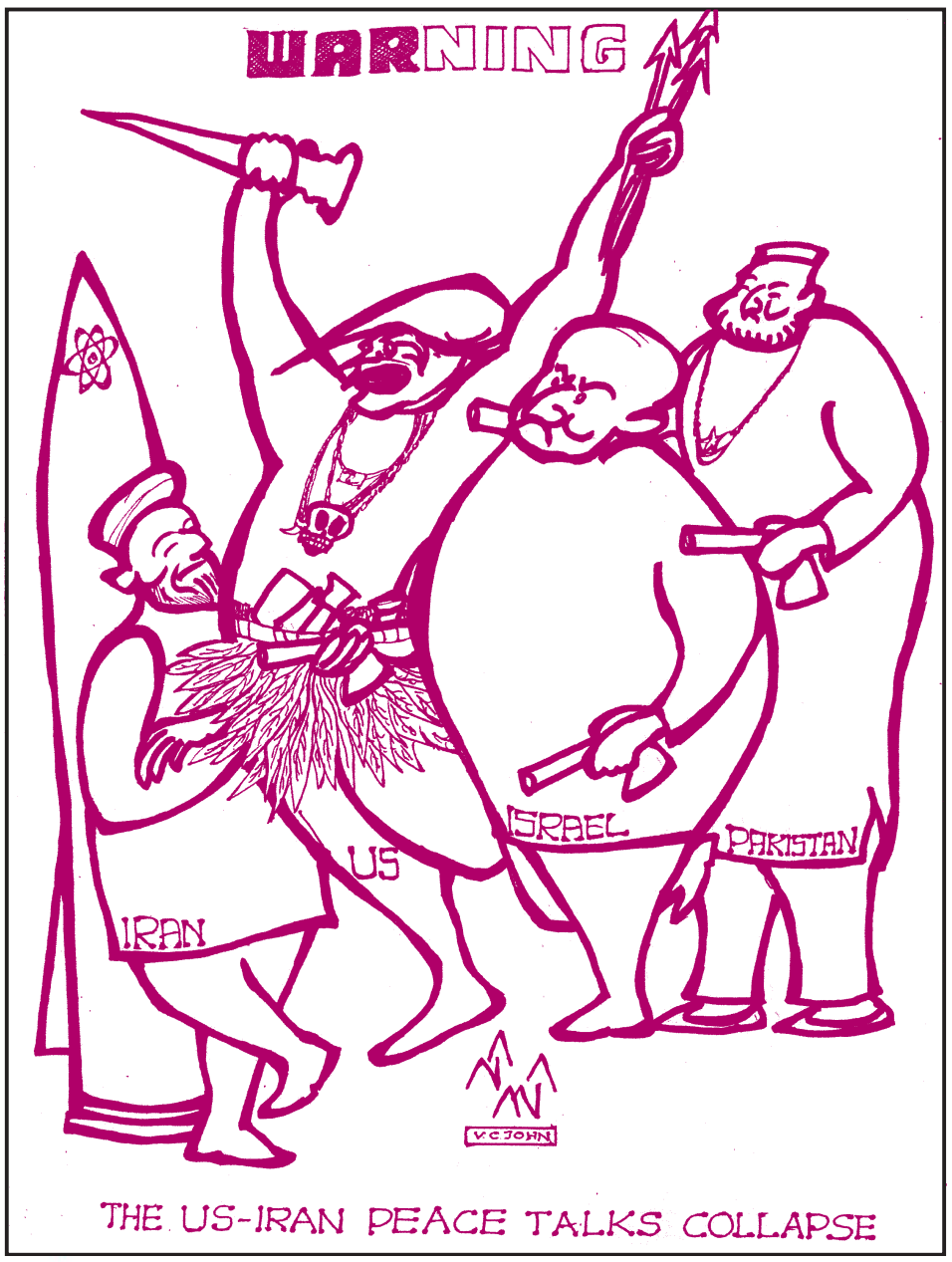

THE US-IRAN PEACE TALKS COLLAPSE

Christian Conference of Asia
CCA
an organ and fellowship of churches and ecumenical councils in asia for initiating and facilitating dynamic christian witness and action

Asia Sunday-2026

'Hope for Redemption of Groaning Creation'

"As Asia is currently confronting an intense convergence of social, economic, political, environmental, and spiritual crises that profoundly shape the lives of its people, the theme of this year's Asia Sunday is both relevant and contextual."

Asia Sunday will be observed by the member churches and councils of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) on 17 May 2026, with focus on the theme "Hope for Redemption of Groaning Creation Amidst Bondage to Decay".

Asia Sunday is observed annually by the CCA member churches and councils on the Sunday before Pentecost. In 2026, it falls on 17 May.

The General Secretary of the CCA Dr Mathews George Chunakara stated, "As Asia is currently confronting an intense convergence of social, economic, political,

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Relationship Based On Love

8 Ensure unimpeded access to Jerusalem's holy sites
Multi-faith Prayer Meeting for Global Peace

WACC communication for all · EMW · Brot für die Welt · Oikoumene World Council of Churches

Advocating for Digital Rights and AI Accountability

Our Common Future

How can faith communities advocate for a future of digital justice in an age marked by the rush towards ever more powerful digital technology and artificial intelligence across all sectors of life?

The World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) in collaboration with the World Council of Churches (WCC), Evangelische Mission Weltweit - Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany, and Brot für die Welt organized a study programme under the title "Our Common Future: Advocating for Digital Rights and AI Accountability," in Berlin, Germany, on 13 and 14 April.

The symposium builds on the groundwork laid at a first, groundbreaking international symposium held in the same city in September 2021 under the heading "Communication for Social Justice in a Digital Age."

Almost five years later, the advances of digital technologies and their impact across all areas of life have continued to progress – not least with the recent global breakthrough and mainstreaming of generative artificial intelligence – making all the more pertinent questions of ethics, justice, accountability, and the role of faith communities.

An international symposium on "Our Common Future: Advocating for Digital Rights and AI Accountability", with participants from key ecumenical networks, was held on 14 April 2026.

William Jones, an associate of the Futures Program at the Future of Life Institute (FLI), underscored that the development of digital technologies should actually benefit all of humanity, and pointed to the lack of accountability in a few major tech companies currently pushing the development of AI solutions without broad consultation with the general public.

"The speed of these developments, is such that we cannot simply think we will take another two years to reflect and then come up with something. I believe, we all agree, this is so important and so urgent, that we need to be much, much faster, and I do hope we can be successful in this."
Bishop Dr. Heinrich Bedford Strohm

"When the CEO of a big tech company says that a certain development will happen and is in fact inevitable, what they are really saying is that for them, that particular development is expected to be profitable," he said.

"My work at FLI focuses on trying to support religious leaders to speak into these issues because we feel that in Silicon Valley there is a real absence of moral wisdom," Jones added.

A key focus of the discussions revolved around questions of lack of transparency and accountability in the current stage of global AI development, and more particularly, the question of what was

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Mass layoffs by big companies

On the morning of March 31, IT firm Oracle dismissed its 30,000 employees – roughly 18% of its global workforce – through a single automated email, with no prior conversation with HR or warning from managers! This number includes 12,000 employees of the company in India. Whereas the employees in the past enjoyed various kinds of protections and security of job, the New Labour Policy introduced as a part of the New Economic Policy at the end of the last century across the world, allows employers to fire workers at any time without prior notice. As a result, mass layoffs by big companies have become a regular affair without any news value!

2,45,000 tech workers were laid off by 783 companies in 2025. As per indications, this number is bound to increase in 2026. In the first quarter of 2026, Amazon, Meta and General Motors have laid off 16000, 15000 and 1300 employees respectively; and Belt Cut, Pendo Raleigh tech and GoPro dropped 30%, 10% and 25% of their workforce respectively. In the past, it was to overcome the situation of continuous fall in profit and signs of fall in demand for their products/services, companies used to fire workers. As against this, today, firms enjoying substantial rise in profit and order-books, fire workers enmass. It must be noted that Oracle laid off 30,000 workers despite earning a profit of $ 6 billion in the first quarter of the year. Further, the company executed this heinous act when its future profitability looked very bright with contracted future revenue at $553 billion – an increase of 325%. This shows very clearly that companies cut the size of their workforce not to enhance profit, but to introduce AI -driven restructuring.

Growing reliance on AI and automation, in all areas of activities including education, health- care and various services, has already rendered millions of workers jobless. The sustenance of those who are abruptly thrown out of employment, is more miserable than that of the unemployed. This section of the people accustomed to higher standard of living and enmeshed with loans for houses, cars and education of children would be forced to suffer from suicide syndrome. Further, abrupt firing of colleagues imposes psychological impacts, referred to as survivor syndrome, on the employees who are allowed to continue in the company pay-roll. Organisational psychologists say that the lay-off survivors consistently develop negative reactions like reduced productivity, erosion of trust in the management and higher intention to leave the company.

The unfolding scenario clearly shows that the technology-driven economic growth and the civilisation are not meant for providing for the needs of humans, but only for facilitating higher rate of accumulation by the super- rich. In the earlier days, social economy was organised for providing for the needs of the people. As against this, the Market Economy introduced profit as the objective and norm of success of the economy.

Today, technology-driven Market Economy completely avoids the question "How do humans live?". What is more disturbing is that the mass-unemployment and the mass-layoffs of workers are not news for the media!

Thought for the Fortnight

"If you really want to kill morale,
have layoffs every two months
for the next two years."

– Tom Peters –

Rooted in Faith And Connected Across the World

M. Mani Chacko

"Rooted in Faith And Connected Across the World"
is God's design for God's church:
stable amid storms, expansive in love.
Let us, like that Psalmic tree, sink deep into Christ's soil
while stretching branches worldwide,
bearing fruit that glorifies God.

In an era of fragmentation — marked by geopolitical tensions, cultural divides, and digital isolation — the call to be "rooted in faith" offers profound stability, while "connected across the world" invites us into God's expansive vision of unity. This dual reality echoes the Biblical imagery of the olive tree in Romans 11, where branches are grafted into a shared root, nourishing diverse peoples. As Psalm 1:3 declares, the righteous are "like trees planted by streams of water," deeply rooted yet bearing fruit that reaches far beyond their soil. Faith, then, is not a solitary anchor but a communal vine, binding believers across continents in Christ's body.

At its core, being rooted in faith means immersion in the unchanging gospel, which guards against the tempests of modernity. Jesus' prayer in John 17:21 "that they may all be one" — reveals faith as a vertical anchor in the Triune God, grounding us amid horizontal disruptions. Consider the early church in Acts 2:42-47: rooted in apostolic teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer, believers shared everything. This rooting empowered radical generosity, from Jerusalem to Antioch. Today, in contexts like Kerala's diverse Christian communities or global Dalit theology movements, faith roots us in liberation narratives — drawing from Exodus motifs where God's faithfulness sustains the oppressed. **Scholars like Mohan Larbeer highlight how such rooting in pathos-driven hermeneutics transforms personal piety into prophetic solidarity, preventing faith from becoming rootless individualism.**

Rev. Dr. M. Mani Chacko,
is a Former General Secretary,
Bible Society of India, Bangalore,
Former Director, Ecumenical Christian Centre, Bangalore,
and Former Principal, Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute, Chennai

Yet rooting without connection risks insularity, echoing the Pharisees' legalism Jesus critiqued. The Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 propels us outward: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." In our interconnected age — via smartphones, Zoom liturgies, and migrant diasporas — technology amplifies this mandate. A pastor in Kottayam might preach to a virtual congregation spanning Kerala, the Gulf, and the West, embodying incarnational theology where Christ's embodiment bridges divides. The World Council of Churches' ecumenical efforts exemplify this: rooted Orthodox faithful in Syria connect with Protestant activists in South Africa, co-creating justice initiatives against human trafficking or climate injustice. Digital platforms, while fraught with echo chambers, become tools for what Paul calls "bearing one another's burdens" (Galatians 6:2), fostering prayer chains that encircle the globe during crises like pandemics or wars.

This rooted-connected faith manifests in three ways. First, through liturgical solidarity: Seasonal observances like Lent unite believers worldwide in fasting and reflection, rooting us in Christ's passion while connecting us via shared symbols. **Second, missional partnerships:** Churches in the Global South, steeped in liberation theology, collaborate with Northern counterparts on sustainable development, as seen in Anglican Communion projects empowering women in India and Uganda. **Third, digital discipleship**: Online Bible studies and podcasts democratise exegesis, allowing a Dalit theologian's insights to inspire a European seminarian, fulfilling Ephesians 4:13's "unity of the faith."

Challenges persist — cultural clashes, cyber-divides, and prosperity gospels that uproot faith from sacrifice. Yet, as in Colossians 2:7, we are "rooted and built up in him," called to "encourage one another" (1 Thessalonians 5:11) across borders. In a world aching for belonging, rooted faith does not isolate; it propels connection, mirroring the Spirit's global outpouring at Pentecost (Acts 2:4-11), where diverse tongues proclaimed one gospel.

"Rooted in Faith And Connected Across the World" is God's design for God's church: stable amid storms, expansive in love. Let us, like that Psalmic tree, sink deep into Christ's soil while stretching branches worldwide, bearing fruit that glorifies God. ●

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The Role of Science in Protecting the Creation in God's Way

Solomon Victus

(Second part of the paper 'The Role of Science in Protecting the Creation in God's Way'. The first part was published in the Issue No. 6 (Vol.39)

Dichotomy in Understanding the Bible

The early Biblical authors understood that God was the Creator, on the basis of the then context of faith and culture – the idea of 'Creation out of nothing' (Heb.11:3) which took place roughly in the 4th to 2nd centuries BCE. However, for the modern natural scientists today, the earth was formed roughly 18 billion years ago. As we are aware, in the meantime, modern Christian scientists who strongly upheld new natural laws they discovered, and expressed positive views on them, were punished, persecuted, excommunicated and executed by the early Church authorities. **It is an open secret that the conservative Christian Church was never at ease with the scientific or materialistic approach to the Bible: rather she always felt comfortable with other-worldly approaches.**

The majority view of the Old Testament (OT) has been not only affirming the earthly life but also promising abundance of life to generations to come. **According to the Bible, God commanded to the Hebrews that land is not a saleable commodity: rather it belongs to God, and the humans are only just strangers (Lev.25:23). This is fairly a socialistic principle of the socialist state too. For a secular democratic socialist it is not a contradictory statement to say that the humans are not supposed to be the owners of land, oceans and resources, but the state. It is part of the natural evolution of human behaviour. Nevertheless Christianity, with the help of the New Testament, takes a new turn in the OT perception.** In order to orient new believers in Christianity, the Pietists as well as right wing ideologists later took the Bible with the influence of dualistic ideas of Hellenism, preaching that our earth is 'devilish and worldly', quite contradictory to the original overall materialistic idea of Reign of God as understood 'on earth as it is in heaven'. In fact otherworldly ideas of angels, demons, resurrection, heaven and hell became originated as well as strengthened since the Inter-Testamental period due to various politico-religious and cultural reasons.[2]

We must note that due to the influence of the dualism of Hellenistic Greek philosophy, the earth was considered a temporary place for the Christians, and that the eternal home will be in heaven. This religious position was carried on superficially by later generations since the time long after the second century of the Christian era in the name of gospel works and colonialism by the Europeans in different countries, demanding a literal reading of the Bible and soul-winning pietism. **Literal understanding of the New Testament passages led most Christians to a wrong hermeneutical approach, negating this earth as a temporary home, until the Liberation Theologians challenged it in the 1960s with a Marxian materialist reading of the texts.** In this context we are able to witness that most Christians, especially in India, do not want to maintain this earth as an everlastingly inhabitable place for generations to come. Rather we promoted otherworldly eternity in our Christian thinking consistently. Once the scientific world had realised that our earth is slowly becoming uninhabitable to all creatures including humans, it was not a serious issue to the majority of Christians. Very survival of our next generation on this earth itself has become endangered. **Now everyone, especially those who aspire to have life before death, is obliged to put our heads together to save the earth and make it inhabitable without considering our religious identities and differences.**

Progressive Christian thinkers in general understand that it is the responsibility of humans to provide a 'trustee role' rather than a 'master role' in caring for nature. The prophetic tradition of the Bible condemns the act of humans taking over the role of God in the name of kings and emperors and possessing natural resources by saying that God is against anyone (empires and corporates) who claims, 'The Nile is mine; I made it' (Eze.29:1-10).

The Rev. Dr. Solomon Victus is a former Professor of Social Analysis at Tamilnadu Theological Seminary at Madurai, Tamil Nadu

The dichotomy that prevails among Christians is represented glaringly by the US President Donald Trump, a staunch believer in the Baptist Evangelical Church tradition, who became a strong campaigner for climate denial by scrapping all environmental agreements made by his predecessor President Barack Obama during his first tenure. Most conservative evangelicals take the same position of working against this earthly life for everyone, and thus have become climate deniers. Moreover, Christian Zionists in the globe who blindly follow American Christian Conservatives and work along with conservative Christian scientists of the US Pentagon believe that with the weapons of mass destruction it is easier to destroy the earth along with one's enemies, justifying the production of more and more arms in order to help Christ for the quick second coming.[3] They do not realise that this is a suicidal attitude of a sect. This position is also comparable with that of Robert Oppenheimer, a conservative Jewish scientist considered the father of atom bomb, who recited a stanza from the *Bhagavad Gita* in relation to the creation and dropping of atom bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.[4]

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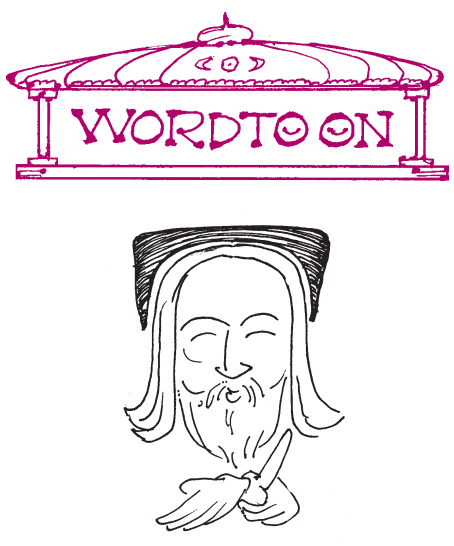

It is time for the YOUNGSTERS to STIR and SING to become YOUNG STARS!

Footnotes

[1] *Sam Amirtham, "Gospel to All Creation" in The Good News of Jesus Christ in the Indian Setting ed.by T. Dayanandan Francis, Chennai: CLS, 2000, p.89-92.*

[2] *John Holder, The Inter-Testamental Period: Old Testament Introduction 4, Delhi: ISPCK, Reprinted 2009, p.55.*

[3] *Sohail H. Hashmi & Steven P. Lee, Ethics and Weapons of Mass Destruction, Cambridge:CUP, 2004, p.200 ff.*

[4] *https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-66288900, accessed on 05/04/2025.*

To be continued

In the next issue

Striking Contradictions

What are the God's ways in a rational perception?

Climate and Biodiversity - 3

The Silent Guardian of the Shore

Mathew Koshy

The mangrove stands quietly at the edge of the sea
— unnoticed, uncelebrated, yet indispensable.
It does not demand recognition.
It simply fulfils its role. And in doing so, it offers us a profound lesson:
In the great harmony of creation, every life has meaning.
What we fail to appreciate today may be what saves us tomorrow.
The mangrove does not speak,
yet its message is clear
To protect life, we must first learn to value even the humblest forms of it.

Have you ever stood before a mangrove tree and wondered what purpose it serves?At first glance, it does not inspire admiration. It rises from muddy waters, its roots twisted and exposed like a struggle frozen in time. It does not offer fragrant flowers or valuable timber. It does not attract the markets or the admiration of those who measure worth in profit.To many, it appears insignificant—almost out of place.Yet nature often hides its deepest wisdom in what we overlook.

The Day, the Ocean Turned Violent

In December 2004, the world witnessed the devastating force of the **2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami**. A massive undersea earthquake near Sumatra sent towering waves racing across the Indian Ocean. Coastlines in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and India were struck with unimaginable force. Villages vanished within minutes. Homes dissolved into the sea.

Nearly 230,000 lives were lost.It appears nothing could stand before the fury of the ocean. And yet—something did.

The Unnoticed Protector

In the aftermath, scientists noticed a curious pattern. Certain coastal regions had suffered far less damage. Among them were parts of Indonesia and the mangrove-rich coast of Pichavaram in Tamil Nadu. When researchers looked closely, they discovered a quiet defender standing between land and sea—the mangrove forest, especially species like **Rhizophora**.

These trees, rooted in salt and mud, had done what concrete walls could not.Their dense, interwoven roots formed a living barrier.When the tsunami waves surged forward, the mangroves resisted — not with force, but with presence. They slowed the water, broke its energy, and softened its impact before it reached human settlements.**Where mangroves stood, lives were saved. Where they had been cleared, destruction was complete.The tree once dismissed as useless, revealed itself as a guardian of life.**

The Hidden Web Beneath the Roots

But the mangrove's role does not end with disaster protection. Beneath its tangled roots lies a thriving world. Tiny fish find shelter in its shadows. Crabs and shrimp begin their lives in their safe embrace. Birds rest and nest in its branches. Countless unseen organisms work silently in its soil. The mangrove is not just a tree — it is a living community.

Dr. Mathew Koshy Punnackadu is presently the Commissioner, Climate Justice and Sustainable Development of the World Council of Churches. Dr. Mathew Koshy Punnackadu is the Project Director of the CSI Community Development Programme.

Remove it, and the web begins to unravel.

Fish disappear.

Coastlines erode.

Storms strike harder.

Livelihoods collapse.

What seemed like a single plant was, in truth, a foundation for many forms of life.

A Lesson Beyond Beauty and Profit

The mangrove challenges the way we measure value. We are often drawn to what is beautiful, useful, or profitable. But creation does not operate by human standards of worth. A species does not need to be admired to be essential. The mangrove does not compete with the rose for beauty, nor with teak for timber. Yet it performs a role that neither can fulfil.

It protects shores.

It nurtures life.

It holds the fragile boundary between land and sea.

Its value lies not in what it gives to markets, but in what it gives to life.

The mangrove's role does not end with disaster protection.
Beneath its tangled roots lies a thriving world.
Tiny fish find shelter in its shadows. Crabs and shrimp begin their lives in their safe embrace.
Birds rest and nest in its branches. Countless unseen organisms work silently in its soil.
The mangrove is not just a tree — it is a living community.
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What seemed like a single plant was, in truth, a foundation for many forms of life.

Interconnected Lives

The story of the mangrove reveals a deeper truth: Nothing in creation exists alone. The fish depend on the mangrove.The fisherman depends on the fish. The village depends on the mangrove forest. When one thread is broken, the entire fabric weakens. This is the rhythm of life — a quiet, interconnected dance where each being, however small or unnoticed, carries a purpose.

Protecting What Protects Us

Across many parts of Asia, mangroves have been cut down for short-term gain — shrimp farms, construction, and expansion. Only after loss did we begin to understand their true worth. Today, efforts are underway to restore these forests.But restoration is more than planting trees.It is a change in perception.

It is learning to recognise that what appears insignificant may be essential.

That which we ignore may be what sustains us.

The Final Reflection

The mangrove stands quietly at the edge of the sea — unnoticed, uncelebrated, yet indispensable. It does not demand recognition. It simply fulfils its role. And in doing so, it offers us a profound lesson:

In the great harmony of creation, every life has meaning.

What we fail to appreciate today may be what saves us tomorrow.

The mangrove does not speak, yet its message is clear

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Asia Sunday-2026

'Hope for Redemption of Groaning Creation'

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environmental, and spiritual crises that profoundly shape the lives of its people, the theme of this year's Asia Sunday is both relevant and contextual."

Ongoing conflicts and violence, political and economic instability, rising unemployment, unchecked militarisation, environmental degradation, cultural fragmentation, inadequate healthcare systems, and the far-reaching impacts of rapid technological advancement continue to shape the region's realities. In this context, the theme of this year's Asia Sunday, focusing on "the groaning of creation" based on the biblical metaphor in Romans 8:22, illustrates the agonising condition and suffering of decay and bondage, but this suffering is purposeful like the pain of childbirth, ultimately leading to new life, explained Dr Chunakara.

"The hope of redemption encourages believers to reflect on, and understand, the current state of degeneration in different areas, including environmental decay and personal suffering. Such conditions need not be considered as final or hopeless, but rather as a transitional phase towards an absolute, divine renewal and revitalisation of the entire cosmos. It is viewed as the culmination of God's redemptive plan. The theme of this year's Asia Sunday focuses on some of these pressing realities and challenges."

"Amidst the accelerating crisis of environmental degradation and climate change, which poses a grave threat not only to human life but to the whole of creation." Dr. Chunakara further stated, "The hope of redemption encourages believers to reflect on, and understand, the current state of degeneration in different areas, including environmental decay and personal suffering. Such conditions need not be considered as final or hopeless, but rather as a transitional phase towards an absolute, divine renewal and revitalisation of the entire cosmos. It is viewed as the culmination of God's redemptive plan. The theme of this year's Asia Sunday focuses on some of these pressing realities and challenges."

The CCA calls upon all member churches, councils, and ecumenical partners to observe Asia Sunday on 17 May 2026 under the theme "Hope for Redemption of Groaning Creation Amidst Bondage to Decay". ***– CCA News***

Christ's Way of Building Trust across Divides

C–Factor

R. Daniel Premkumar

The C–Factor invites the Church into: Immersion rather than distance
Participation rather than observation.
Shared struggle rather than detached service. Creation-friendly agriculture becomes one such platform.
It brings together care for the earth, dignity of labour, and the well-being of communities.
It embodies Kingdom values such as: Life in abundance, Justice and fairness,
Care for creation, Mutual respect and coexistence
This is not merely an activity. It is a way of rebuilding trust and nurturing community across divides.

Today, our society stands deeply fractured along lines of caste, gender, and community. Suspicion and hostility often replace trust, making peaceful coexistence difficult, especially for minorities. In such a climate, relationships across differences become strained, and communities withdraw into themselves.

Yet, this is not a new reality. In the time of Jesus, society too was sharply divided. **The Gospels show us that Jesus did not avoid such divisions. Instead, He entered them intentionally and redemptively. In doing so, He revealed a pattern of engagement that remains deeply relevant for us today. This pattern may be understood as the C–Factor.**

The C–Factor may be described as the shared human ground where trust is built through honest engagement, mutual need, and the recognition of each other's dignity.

A. Jesus and the Samaritan Woman: A Meeting at the Well (John 4)

One of the clearest illustrations of this is found in Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman.

The hostility between Jews and Samaritans was intense. A devout Jew would avoid Samaritan territory altogether. Yet Jesus deliberately travels through Samaria. **This is the first movement of the C–Factor — the willingness to cross boundaries. At the well, Jesus speaks to a Samaritan woman. This itself breaks multiple social barriers: religious, ethnic, and gender-based. A rabbi engaging in theological conversation with a woman was highly unusual. Here we see the second movement — the courage to engage with dignity across social norms.**

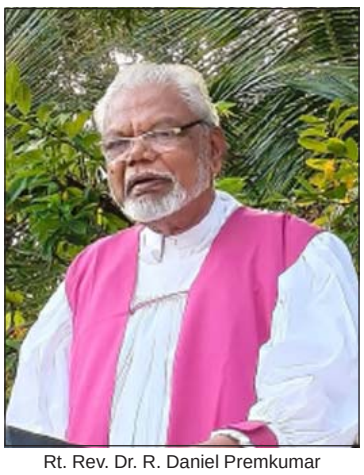
Importantly, Jesus does not deny or minimise the deep divisions between Jews and Samaritans. He openly acknowledges them. **This becomes the third movement — truthful recognition of difference without hostility.**

And what becomes their meeting point?

It is water — a shared human need. In that simple, everyday necessity, a space opens for dialogue, understanding, and transformation. Jesus does not erase differences. He builds relationship through a shared space of need, truth, and respect. **This is the C–Factor in action.**

A Pattern in the Ministry of Jesus

This way of engaging is not limited to one encounter. It is seen throughout the Gospels. Jesus reaches out to Zacchaeus, a tax collector despised by his own people. He responds to the plea of a Roman centurion, a representative of an occupying power.



Rt. Rev. Dr. R. Daniel Premkumar is the Bishop of the Ruvuma Diocese of the Anglican Church, Tanzania

He restores the man possessed in the region of the Gerasenes, a place considered outside the bounds of religious purity. In each of these situations, **Jesus follows a similar pattern: He crosses social and cultural boundaries.**

He acknowledges the reality of difference He engages through a shared human concern. This consistent approach reflects the deeper movement of the C–Factor — a way of building trust where suspicion once prevailed.

B. This principle is not only theological; it must become lived reality.

At the Life Giving Agricultural Center in Malapalli, we experienced this truth over a span of thirteen years. We did not begin with ideas or programmes alone. We entered into the life of farming — slowly, patiently, and with humility.

We immersed ourselves in:
Soil and water management
The use of locally resilient seeds
Livestock care
The uncertainties of rainfall
The struggles of farmers to secure fair prices (MSP)
The unpredictability of markets.

Through this shared labour and vulnerability, something deeper began to take shape. Trust did not come quickly. It grew gradually, through participation and presence.

People of different faiths did not come together because of persuasion or argument.

They came together because of a shared engagement with the land, the seasons, and the fragile rhythms of life.

Here, the C–Factor became visible — not as a concept, but as a lived experience.

C. C–Factor and the Call of the Church Today

For the Church to engage meaningfully with people of other faiths today, it must move beyond words into shared life.

The C–Factor invites the Church into: Immersion rather than distance

Participation rather than observation.

Shared struggle rather than detached service. Creation-friendly agriculture becomes one such platform. It brings together care for the earth, dignity of labour, and the well-being of communities. It embodies Kingdom values such as:

Life in abundance

Justice and fairness

Care for creation

Mutual respect and coexistence

This is not merely an activity. It is a way of rebuilding trust and nurturing community across divides.

D. Conclusion

If for Jesus, the building of trust may have taken moments, for us it may take years — even decades. Yet the path remains the same.

We are called:

To enter the spaces we have long avoided

To share life with those who are different from us

To build trust through common ground and shared humanity

The C–Factor is Christ's way of transforming

suspicion into relationship,

and division into life-giving community.

In a fractured world, this path is not optional.

It is essential and life affirming.

●

Advocating for Digital Rights and AI Accountability

Our Common Future

>>> Contd. from Page 1 Col. 4

dubbed at the meeting "the right to know".

Serena Tiburtini, World Student Christian Federation-Europe's regional secretary and global programme coordinator for youth, security, and peacebuilding, said, "Digital justice is much more complex than the term can just suggest, because it's not just about using AI responsibly as it is. It is also about shaping the structures that will make it just and responsible for all."

"We often want to go to the United Nations and in one step try to change the world, but even in the absence of that, there is so much that we can do in our spaces and communities", said Emy Osorio Matorel, an advisor for digital analysis and strategy at CAMECO.

In the closing session, conversations zeroed in on three action areas for digital justice and AI accountability: 1. Advocacy in international and national spaces 2. Building critical thinking through existing and new educational resources and methodologies

Participants representing key ecumenical networks and partners.
Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

3. Ensuring continued cross-sectoral networking.

Participants observed the importance of lifting up voices often unheard, of standing up as representatives of faith communities to provide a moral guiding voice, but also of moving into concrete advocacy and action before the issues at hand are beyond control.

WCC Moderator Bishop Dr. Heinrich Bedford-Strohm observed in the closing session, that we are challenged to act with urgency. He said, "The speed of these developments is such that we cannot simply think we will take another two years to reflect and then come up with something. I believe we all agree this is so important and so urgent, that we need to be much, much faster, and I do hope we can be successful in this."

– WACC News

Young People's Column

Jeypore Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC) in Odisha

Youth reimagine gender justice in daily life

In a context where many people are unfamiliar with the gender justice concept, a theological education programme is inspiring youth to question long-held traditions and practices in church and society.

Conversations among young women and men in the Jeypore Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC) in Odisha, India, have opened up reflections on what justice, equality, and dignity look like in their daily lives.

Inspired by The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Theology, Gender Justice, Education and Leadership (TGLE) program, youth leader Sourav Sampan Goudo shared his experience from a series of workshops that he organized for JELC youth in February. The events followed his participation in the first ***Asian region*** TGLE program held in Malaysia in 2025. Through online and in-person sessions, the program equipped attendees with leadership skills and encouraged them to initiate small contextual projects in their home churches and communities.

The concept of gender justice remains unfamiliar to many in India, noted Goudo, an active member of the LWF Youth network and a junior lecturer of English at a local university. He shared how deep-rooted social and cultural beliefs that prioritize men over women continue to influence unequal access to education, employment, and rights.

Goudo explained why the ***TGLE*** topics are important for a church whose members mostly come from Dalit, tribal, and other marginalized communities. "There are 21 ordained women pastors in JELC. Although the women perform the same tasks as their male counterparts, they are yet to be elected to major leadership roles," he said. Others are discouraged from pursuing higher education or employment opportunities despite their potential.

"One Body, Many Equals – Empowered for Justice" was the theme of the first of the three JELC workshops that Goudo led which drew 20 participants (12 women and 8 men), capturing a vision of collective empowerment and a shared commitment to equal rights for all. **It focused on developing an inclusive approach to social justice, affirming that every person has the right to dignity and equal access to opportunities, participation, and protection.**

"Gender justice was explained in clear and practical ways, helping young people identify gender norms within their families, churches, and communities as part of broader responsible theological endeavors," he said. Participants also explored what is just and unjust and considered practical ways to foster shared responsibility and inclusion. **Many expressed a commitment to practice gender justice in their places of study, at home, and at work, recognizing their role in shaping safer and more caring communities.**

"I wanted to introduce young women and men to a basic understanding of gender justice within the context of church, family, and community life," Sourav Goudo emphasized.

Frank discussions led to greater awareness of gender issues, changes in attitudes, and commitment to gender justice and equality. "Youth agreed to implement these ideas in their places of study, at home, and at work so that shared leadership and respect can foster safe and caring communities."

Participants in the gender justice and leadership education workshop at the Jeypore Evangelical Lutheran Church in Odisha. Photo: JELC

Dialogue, role reversal and real-life stories

The workshop included interactive sessions on real-life case studies from church and community contexts and an exercise on role reversal. What would it look like if women took the front row at village council meetings and led discussions on policies and budgets? What if men were expected to demonstrate skills that are traditionally attributed to women? Youth also discussed how meeting schedules often exclude girls who cannot attend evening gatherings due to safety and social concerns.

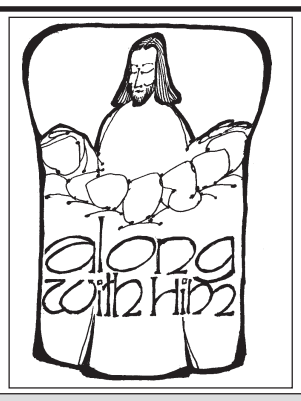
Group reflections and open sharing created space for participants to acknowledge existing injustices and build awareness of equality and dignity. Practical tools related to climate justice and environmental concerns were also introduced and discussed.

Fostering, caring communities

Frank discussions led to greater awareness of gender issues, changes in attitudes, and commitment to gender justice and equality. "Youth agreed to implement these ideas in their places of study, at home, and at work so that shared leadership and respect can foster safe and caring communities," added Goudo.

The JELC workshop also provided space to learn about the LWF—its mission and ongoing work. Goudo distributed posters on gender justice, and youth committed to displaying them in workplaces, churches, and near their homes as visible reminders to practise justice in everyday life.

Commenting on the training, Rev. Dr Marcia Blasi, LWF Program Executive for Gender Justice and Women's Empowerment, said, "Each context has its own challenges and opportunities. The Theology, Gender Justice and Leadership Education Program encourages participants to engage locally, to confront injustices and promote change, one step at a time." –LWF News



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Mammen Varkey

"On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the father has sent me, even so I send you". And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." John 20:19-23 (RSV)

Easter Reflections – 2

From Jerusalem to Jordan

Entering the place 'with locked doors' (TEV), where the disciples were gathered, and greeting the fear-stricken disciples with the very re-assuring words "Peace be with you", the Risen Master showed them his hands and his side. As we shared in the last reflection, this act of the Risen Christ is generally taken simply as an act to prove that he was their crucified Master himself, and also that his was bodily resurrection. But for the disciples, that act would have definitely awakened them to some supremely important things. It was a great proclamation, re-affirmation, of the path of the cross. And that God the Father / the Parent approved the path Jesus chose and He raised their Master from the dead.

A radical re-understanding needed

The Risen Lord would not have been surprised that the disciples, according to John, did not go out and run around in search of their Risen Master. Ten of them locked themselves inside a room. It should be remembered that Jesus himself had taken a long time to decide on the path that he should take for carrying out his mission. At the age of twelve, we see him inside the Temple at Jerusalem, *"sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions". Luke 2:46.* The next eighteen years must have been a time of profound meditations and deliberations. Jesus' spiritual journey of eighteen years is summarized in one verse by Luke. *"And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature; and in favour with God and man". Luke 2:52.* Generally this period is taken as a time Jesus spent with his parents, helping his father Joseph in his carpentry work. **But a radically different understanding of the period is needed. While he "went down with them and came to Nazareth and was obedient to them", Luke 2:51, he would have spent that time also for profound meditations and very serious deliberations on the path and nature of his mission that he had to carry out fulfilling the purpose of his birth.** So at the age of 30, because it is written, "Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age" Luke 3:23, we see him at Jordan to be baptized by John.

From the Priests to a Prophet

It is the meditations and deliberations of eighteen years that inspired and empowered Jesus to leave Nazareth in Galilee and to go over to Jordan.

The result of Jesus' "increase in wisdom and in favour with God and man", Luke 2:52, can be put in a rhyming way.

At the age of twelve
we see him in Jerusalem.
but at the age of thirty
we see him at Jordan.
At the age of twelve
we see him with Priests
but at the age of thirty
we see him with a Prophet.
At the age of twelve
we see him in a Temple
but at the age of thirty
we see him
in the Temporal World.

The temptations

According to Mark, immediately after receiving baptism from John, Jesus went to the desert where he was tempted by Satan. "At once the spirit made him go into the desert where he stayed for forty days being tempted by Satan". Mark 1:12 (TEV). **Actually, the temptation was regarding the path he should choose for his public ministry, for establishing the 'kingdom of God'. Mark 1:15. At that stage, it is clearly written, Jesus overcame all the three temptations.**

The temptations to go by
- **the way of enticing with material and monetary benefits,**
- **the way of power and**
- **the way of miracles**

ie of using super human power.

Jesus rejected all these ways. And he was clear about the way that he should take for establishing the 'kingdom of God', the purpose for which he was born.

Eighteen years and forty days

Actually, it should be noted, the victory over these temptations was the result of Jesus' 'growth in body and in wisdom, gaining favour with God and men', Luke 2:52 (TEV), during the eighteen years that he spent meditating and deliberating on the mission that had been entrusted to him by his Father / Parent. The temptations are generally taken as a matter of forty days that he spent in the desert. **But it was on the basis of the long, profound, and agonizing meditations and deliberations that he had all through his life until the age of 30, that Jesus chose the path of the Cross for the establishment of the 'kingdom of God'.**

The most important purpose of showing the marks on his palms and on his side, was to challenge the disciples who had locked themselves inside the rooms, about his way, the way of the cross. ●

To be continued

LAMP UNTO THE FEET, LIGHT UNTO THE PATH

Relationship Based On Love

A. V. Itty

Eph. 6:5-9

"Remember that the Lord will reward everyone, whether slave or free, for the good work he does." (v.8).

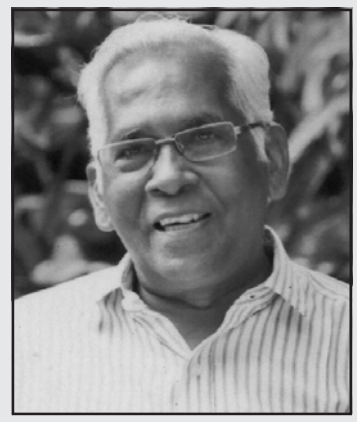
Ernest Gordon, an officer in the British Army, was captured by the Japanese, when he was leading his men to the Samadra Island in 1942. They sent him to a labour camp on the border between Thailand and Burma. Those days he had no contact with Jesus Christ. Later, he was shifted to a camp for the terminally ill as he was suffering from a fatal disease. He did not have any hope concerning his future.

In that situation he surrendered himself completely to Jesus Christ and decided to live for the sake of the Kingdom of God, if he was delivered from his hopeless conditions. God in His mercy healed him completely. After the war, he was freed from the custody of the Japanese. **He started witnessing for Jesus Christ. Later God helped him to start a University. He has spoken of his life in this way: "I had lived in fatal conditions and was personally doomed. Jesus Christ redeemed me from that life and gave me freedom and inheritance as the son of God. It was Christ's sufferings that paved the way for that. I feel that it is my responsibility to talk to those who live in despair, pain and tragic situations, about the love of Christ and the deliverance He provides".**

In the Scripture portion we meditate upon, St. Paul talks about the master-slave relationship centred in Christ. Unlike the master-slave relationship that prevailed **in those days, he exhorts the believers that there should emerge a new relationship between the two sections, i.e., the masters and the slaves: a new form of relationship centred in Christ, based on love and the feeling of brotherhood.**

We should be able to take these words spoken in the backdrop of a world where slavery was prevalent, not in their literal sense, but in their spirit in our lives. **Let our relationships grow in brotherhood/sisterhood dimensions. May God bless us and enable us to practise it in our lives.**

May God help
a new world to emerge. ●



Prof. A. V. Itty, former Professor of English at Bishop Moore College, Mavelikara, is, now, engaged in the Evangelical, and Educational Ministry undertaken by ADORE in the Rayagada Dist. of Odisha. 94950 17850 (Mob)

Food For Thought:

God created everyone as equal, free, and brothers and sisters. What God wants is a love centred human fellowship!

World Council of Churches

Ensure unimpeded access to Jerusalem's holy sites

Holy Fire Saturday in Jerusalem on 11 April was marked with violence against Christian worshipers, as Israel security personnel once again denied Christians their right to worship freely in Jerusalem. Worshipers who managed to enter Jerusalem's Old City found themselves trapped between checkpoints placed a few meters from one another. Access to the Holy Sepulchre Church was denied, as was access to the Orthodox Patriarchate at the rooftop of the church. The plaza area inside the Patriarchate remained empty except for approximately 100 Christians who endured beatings and checkpoints before they managed their way through. Inside the Patriarchate's plaza there were more armed Israeli security personnel than worshipers. As per Jerusalem's legal historical Status Quo, local worshipers have the right to assemble inside the Patriarchate and to wait for the Holy Fire once it arrives from the empty tomb.

Hearing that the Holy Fire Saturday in Jerusalem on 11 April was marked with violence against Christian worshipers, World Council of Churches general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay called on Israeli authorities to protect the status of Jerusalem as a city holy to the three monotheistic religions.

His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilus III of Jerusalem and of all Palestine during the Holy Light ceremony on 11 April at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem.
Photo: Jerusalem-Patriarchate

Rev. Dr. Pillay said, "The World Council of Churches is asking the government of Israel, once again, to allow unimpeded access to Jerusalem's holy sites as per the Status Quo, and to refrain from violence against worshippers who simply want to exercise their faith. Lessons learned need to be taken by the relevant Israeli authorities in Jerusalem, to avoid violence against ordinary civilians who simply want to pray and to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

The approach of setting up barricades in Jerusalem Old City has failed, noted Pillay.

"At the same time, hindrance to Muslims' free access to Al-Aqsa Mosque/Haram Al-Sharief in Jerusalem must be addressed and resolved. Christians and Muslims are feeling increasingly unwelcome in Jerusalem, and this message needs to reach the entire world, particularly the government of Israel. The World Council of Churches wants to see Jerusalem as a city where all faiths enjoy equal rights, But this can happen only through the willingness to admit the failure of the current structure and to seek a new one that ensures equity and justice," Dr. Pillay said.

The World Council of Churches wants to see Jerusalem as a city where all faiths enjoy equal rights: Christians, Jews, and Muslims. But this can happen only through the willingness to admit the failure of the current structure and to seek a new one that ensures equity and justice. ***– WCC News***

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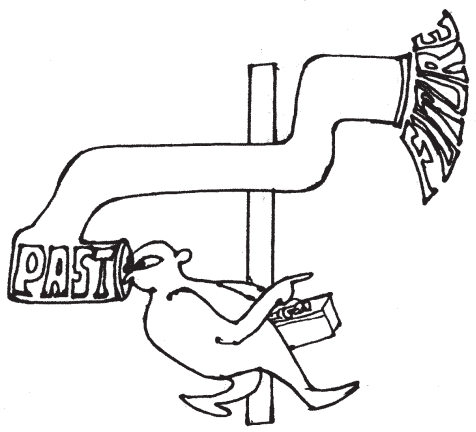

I know no way of judging
the future
but by the past

– Patrick Henry

Catholic Bishops' Conference Of India (CBCI)
Office For Dialogue & Desk For Ecumenism

Multi-faith Prayer Meeting for Global Peace

In the backdrop of several ongoing conflicts and wars across the world, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI), through its Office for Dialogue and Desk for Ecumenism (OD&DE), convened a Multi-faith Prayer Meeting for Global Peace, under the banner of the interreligious forum called "Shanthi Sabha – A Multifaith Assembly for Peace".

Multi-faith Prayer Meeting for Global Peace
– Leaders and Participants

The event was held at the CBCI Centre, New Delhi, on April 14, 2026. It brought together prominent religious leaders from various faith traditions who gathered in a spirit of unity to pray for peace and harmony in the world.

The programme began with a welcome address delivered by Archbishop Anil Joseph Couto, Secretary General of CBCI, followed by an opening bhajan on peace and the lighting of the traditional lamp. A Shanti Meditation session was led by Brahma Kumari Husain Bandi Imam.

The key highlight of the gathering was the offering of prayers by leaders from diverse religious traditions according to their own Faith formulas and *slokas*. These included Dr. A.K. Merchant and Mrs. Nilakshi Rajkhowa, the leaders of the Baha'i Community, Acharya Yeshi Phuntsok, Former Deputy Speaker of the Tibetan Parliament (Buddhist), Cardinal Anthony Poola, President of CBCI (Christian), Swami Sarvalokananda, Secretary of the Rama Krishna Mission (Hindu), Dr. Waris Hussain, Assistant Secretary of Jammat-e-Islami Hind (Islamic), Acharya Lokesh Muni, Founder of Ahimsa Peace Center (Jain), and Marazban Nariman Zaiwalla, leader of the Parsi community (Zoroastrian).

Others also offered prayers. Then a common prayer was held, "Lord, make me an instrument of Peace," which was recited by all holding lighted candles in their hands. The proposal made for passing a resolution on global peace was accepted.

The event concluded with the vote of thanks proposed by the organiser Fr. Dr. Anthoniraj Thumma, Secretary of the CBCI Office for Dialogue and Desk for Ecumenism, and a closing bhajan. The Shanthi Sabha Prayer Meeting reflected CBCI's ongoing commitment to fostering interreligious harmony and promoting collective spiritual efforts toward global peace.

– CBCI News

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